

**Q: Is this an experimental vaccine?**

A: No, Anthrax vaccine has been FDA approved since 1970 (MBPI Establishment License No. 99).

**Q: Is this vaccine safe?**

A: Yes, this vaccine has been safely and routinely administered in the U. S. to veterinarians, laboratory workers, and livestock handlers since 1970. No reports of serious adverse effects have been received by the manufacturer, Michigan Biologic Products Institute.

**Q: What if I am pregnant?**

A: Pregnant women should not receive this vaccine. If you are or believe that you may be pregnant, you should inform your health care provider. The vaccination program will be deferred until the pregnancy is complete.

**Q: What other medical conditions should I inform the medical staff about?**

A: If you have an active infection or are taking a prescription medicine, inform your health care provider before taking this shot.

**Q: The anthrax vaccine was administered to personnel deployed in the Gulf War. Has the anthrax vaccine been linked to illnesses among Gulf War veterans?**

A: No. Several national scientific groups, including the National Academy of Sciences, have addressed this issue and found no evidence to link anthrax vaccine with illnesses among Gulf War veterans.

**Q: How many shots will I have to take?**

A: Six shots, three given two weeks apart followed by three additional injections given at 6, 12 and 18 months. An annual booster shot is required to maintain ongoing immunity.

**Q: What are the side effects?**

A: As with other vaccinations, pain may occur at the site of injection. Temporary side effects (sore arm, redness, and slight swelling) may occur. The vaccine has been in use since 1970 with no known long term side effects.

**Q: Am I required to take the vaccine?**

A: Yes. This program will be treated like any other vaccine that is required to prepare you for deployment. You will be required to take it unless medically deferred.

**Q: How can I get more information about anthrax vaccine?**

A: Your commander or supporting medical facility. In addition, more information on the anthrax vaccine can be accessed at the website:

[http://www.defenselink.mil/other\\_info/protection.html#Anthrax](http://www.defenselink.mil/other_info/protection.html#Anthrax)

# WHAT EVERY SERVICE MEMBER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE ANTHRAX VACCINE



Anthrax is a highly lethal biological weapon.

**"Vaccination against anthrax is a safe, prudent force protection measure."**

**William S. Cohen**  
Secretary of Defense

## WHAT IS THE THREAT?

Biological weapons are maintained by several countries around the world. Use of these weapons could cause widespread illness among unprotected military forces.

Anthrax is the biological weapon most likely to be encountered because it is:

- Highly lethal
- Easy to produce in large quantities
- Relatively easy to develop as a weapon
- Easily spread over a large area
- Easily stored and dangerous for a long time

## WHAT IS ANTHRAX?

Anthrax is a disease normally associated with plant-eating animals (sheep, goats, cattle, and to a lesser degree swine). It is caused by the bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*. Once common where livestock were raised, it is now controlled through animal vaccination programs. Anthrax still occurs in countries where animals are not vaccinated, mainly in Africa and Asia. It does occur infrequently in many countries, including the United States.

Human infection with anthrax usually results from direct contact with infected animals, or animal products such as wool, meat or hides. However, when anthrax is used as a biological weapon, people become infected by breathing anthrax that is released into the air.

Inhalation anthrax is the disease that results from breathing anthrax.

Symptoms of inhalation anthrax can begin as early as 24 hours after breathing the spores. Initial symptoms include: fever, cough, and weakness and usually progress to breathing problems, shock, and death.

## WHY VACCINATE?

Vaccines prevent illness by stimulating the body's natural disease-fighting abilities. They are among the most powerful tools developed by modern medicine for keeping people healthy. Vaccines are routinely used in the United States to protect against diseases such as mumps, measles, whooping cough, and polio. As part of force protection, military personnel are given additional vaccines to protect against naturally occurring diseases encountered when deploying overseas, such as typhoid, hepatitis, and yellow fever. Vaccines also help protect against biological weapons.

The Department of Defense has established a vaccination program to protect military personnel against anthrax.

## WHAT IS THE ANTHRAX VACCINE?

Anthrax vaccine is a sterile product made from filtrates of cultures of a strain of the anthrax organism that does not cause disease. The vaccine contains no living or dead anthrax organisms. The anthrax vaccine is not new. Human anthrax vaccines were developed in England and the U.S. in the 1950s and early 1960s. The anthrax vaccine you will receive was licensed by the FDA in 1970 and has been manufactured by the Michigan Biologic Products Institute (MBPI) under Establishment License No. 99.

**It has been safely and routinely administered in the United States to veterinarians, laboratory workers, and livestock handlers for more than twenty-five years.**

## FACTS ABOUT THE ANTHRAX VACCINE

- Vaccination is a critical part of protection against infection
- Manufactured in the United States
- Safely used for more than 25 years
- As with other vaccinations, pain may occur at the site of injection
- Temporary side effects (sore arm, redness, and slight swelling) may occur
- No known long term side effects
- Six shots are required over 18 months, followed by an annual booster

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q: Why are we getting this vaccine?**

A: Anthrax is a lethal weapon we may encounter. Vaccination before exposure is a critical part of our protection against this weapon.

**Q: Is the vaccine all I need to protect against inhalation anthrax?**

A: Being fully vaccinated greatly increases your chances of surviving an exposure to anthrax. Your chances are further improved by other measures, especially proper use of the protective mask.